wrote the First Amendment. The press, after all, is the one institution that the Founding Fathers permanently protected so that reporters could be a check on the abuse of power.

And it is impossible to imagine that what the founders had in mind when they wrote the impeachment clause is that a president could be brought down by that prosecutor and by that press corps, all because a Linda Tripp had a Lucianne Goldberg got an intern to talk into a tapped phone about sex so they could put together a book deal.

So far, it seems that the American people understand this, even if the press doesn't.

So maybe it's the press that needs to draw lessons from Pressgate, not its customers. Or maybe the customers can force these lessons on the press by being more skeptical of the product that is peddled to them. I have three such lessons in mind:

First, consumers of the press should ignore all publications or newscasts that try to foist the term ''sources'' on them unaccompanied by any qualifiers or explanation. The number of sources should be specified (is it two or 20?) and the knowledge, perspective, and bias of those sources should be described, even if the source cannot be named. (Is it a cab driver or a cabinet officer, a defense lawyer or a prosecutor?)

Second, no one should read or listen to a media organization that reports on another news outlet's reporting of anything significant and negative without doing its own verification.

And, third, no one should read or listen to any media outlet that consistently shows that it is the lapdog of big, official power rather than a respectful skeptic.

The big power here is Ken Starr. Prosecutors usually are in crime stories, and the independent counsel's power is unprecedented.

This is what makes Pressgate—the media's performance in the lead-up to the Lewinsky story and in the first weeks of it—a true scandal, a true instance of an institution being corrupted to its core. For the competition for scoops to toss out into a frenzied, high-tech news cycle seems to have so bewitched almost everyone that the press eagerly let the man in power write the story—once Linda Tripp and Lucianne Goldberg put it together for him.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SCARBOROUGH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCARBOROUGH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RUSH addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Idaho (Mrs. CHENOWETH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. CHENOWETH addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW ARTICLE ''WHERE WE WENT WRONG . . . AND WHAT WE DO NOW''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, it is coincidental that my good friend, the gentleman from Michigan, was here just a few moments ago and entered into the RECORD the article by Stephen Brill which appeared in Brill's Content, the Independent Voice of the Information Age, which talks about Pressgate.

In that article, Mr. Brill says on the cover, ''In Watergate, reporters checked abuse of power. In the Lewinsky affair, they enabled it; that is, the press enabled abuse of power by lapping up Ken Starr's leaks, which he now admits for the first time, the inside story day by day. Mr. CONYERS just entered that article into the RECORD.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the Members of the House and anyone else who is interested in this issue to the March-April edition of Columbia Journalism Review. I do so because, unfortunately, Mr. Brill's article has been attacked. It has been attacked most vociferously by the Independent Counsel and the apologists for the Independent Counsel, Mr. Starr.

However, objective analysis of Mr. Brill's article shows that in spite of the attacks against it, the article stands up very well and reveals quite clearly the abuse of power engaged in by the Independent Counsel in this particular investigation.

The Independent Counsel, it appears, and it is shown by Mr. Brill's article, engaged in a conscious series of leaks of misinformation to the press over a prolonged period of time. Now, if additional substantiation is needed going beyond Mr. Brill's report, that additional substantiation can be found to a remarkable degree in that March-April edition of the Columbia Journalism Review.

The article in Columbia Journalism Review, and it is a cover story, is entitled ''Where We Went Wrong,'' and it is an examination of the press coverage of the so-called events that the prosecutor is allegedly looking into.

I would like to read a few brief excerpts from the story in the Columbia Journalism Review and then enter the entire article in the RECORD.

The article says, in part, ''But the explosive nature of the story, and the speed with which it burst upon the consciousness of the Nation, triggered in the early stages a Piranha-like frenzy in pursuit of the relatively few tidbits tossed into the journalistic waters—by whom,'' the story asks?

''That there were wholesale leaks from lawyers and investigators was evident, but either legal restraints or reportorial pledges of anonymity kept the public from knowing with any certainty the sources of key elements in the saga.''

The story goes on: ''Not just the volume but the methodology of the reporting came in for sharp criticism—often more rumor-mongering than fact-getting and fact-checking, and unattributed approbation of the work and speculation of others. The old yardstick said to have been applied by the Post in the Watergate story, that every revelation had to be confirmed by two sources before publication, was summarily abandoned by many news outlets,'' and no wonder, because they thought they were getting the information from the horse's mouth, from Mr. Starr and his investigators.

The story goes on: ''As often as not, reports were published or broadcast without a single source named or mentioned in an attribution so vague as to be worthless. Readers and listeners were told repeatedly that this or that information came from ''sources'', a word that at best conveyed only the notion that the information was not pure fiction or fantasy. As leaks flew wildly from these unspecified sources, the American public was left, as seldom before in a major news event, to guess where stories came from and why.

''Readers and listeners were told what was reported to be included in affidavits and depositions . . . or presented to Independent Counsel Starr. Leakers were violating the rules while the public was left to guess about their identity and about the truth of what was passed on to them through the news media, often without the customary tests of validity.''

Of course, the story goes on.

I include this article for the RECORD, Mr. Chairman. We will take other opportunities to talk more about this in the future.

The article referred to is as follows:

[From the Columbia Journalism Review, Mar./Apr. 1998]

WHERE WE WENT WRONG

(By Jules Witcover)

In the sex scandal story that has cast a cloud over the president, Bill Clinton does not stand to be the only loser. No matter how it turns out, another will be the American news media, whose reputation as truth-teller to the country has been besmirched by perceptions, in and out of the news business, about how the story has been reported.

The indictment is too sweeping. Many news outlets have acted with considerable responsibility, especially after the first few frantic days, considering the initial public pressure for information, the burden of obtaining much of it from sealed documents in

legal proceedings and criminal investigations, and the stonewalling of President Clinton and his White House aides.

But the explosive nature of the story, and the speed with which it burst on the consciousness of the nation, triggered in the early stages a piranha-like frenzy in pursuit of the relatively few tidbits tossed into the journalistic waters by—whom? That there were wholesale leaks from lawyers and investigators was evident, but either legal restraints or reportorial pledges of anonymity kept the public from knowing with any certainty the sources of key elements in the saga.

Into the vacuum created by a scarcity of clear and credible attribution raced all manner of rumor, gossip, and, especially, hollow sourcing, making the reports of some mainstream outlets scarcely distinguishable from supermarket tabloids. The rush to be first or to be more sensational created a picture of irresponsibility seldom seen in the reporting of presidential affairs. Not until the story settled in a bit did much of the reporting again begin to resemble what has been expected of mainstream news organizations.

The Clinton White House, in full damage-control mode, seized on the leaks and weakly attributed stories to cast the news media as either a willing or unwitting collaborator of sorts with independent counsel Kenneth Starr's investigation of alleged wrongdoing by the president. Attacking the independent counsel and his office was a clear diversionary tactic, made more credible to many viewers and readers by suggesting that the overzealous news business, so suspect already in many quarters, was being used by Starr.

Unlike the Watergate scandal of twenty-five years ago, which trickled out over twenty-six months, this scandal broke like a thunderclap, with the direst predictions from the start. Whereas in the Watergate case the word impeachment was unthinkable and not uttered until much later in the game, the prospect of a premature end to the Clinton presidency was heard almost at once. ''Is He Finished?'' asked the cover line on *U.S. News & World Report*. Not to be outdone, *The Economist* of London commanded, ''If It's True, Go.''

ABC News's White House correspondent Sam Donaldson speculated on *This Week with Sam and Cokie* on January 25 that Clinton could resign before the next week was out. ''If he's not telling the truth,'' Donaldson said, ''I think his presidency is numbered in days. This isn't going to drag out. . . . Mr. Clinton, if he's not telling the truth and the evidence shows that, will resign, perhaps this week.''

After Watergate, it was said that the president had been brought down by two reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, and their newspaper, The Washington Post, and they were widely commended for it. This time, after initial reporting by Michael Isikoff of Newsweek, there was a major piling-on by much of American print and electronic journalism, for which they have been widely castigated. A Washington Post poll taken ten days after the story broke found 56 percent of those surveyed believed the news media were treating Clinton unfairly, and 74 percent said they were giving the story ''too much attention.''

The advent of twenty-four-hour, all-news cable channels and the Intenet assured the story of non-stop reportage and rumor, augmented by repeated break-ins of normal network programming and late-night rebashes. Viewing and listening audiences swelled, as did newspaper and magazine circulation, accommodated by special press runs.

Not just the volume but the methodology of the reporting came in for sharp criticism—often more rumor-mongering than fact-getting and fact-checking, and unattributed appropriation of the work and speculation of others. The old yardstick said to have been applied by the Post in the Watergate story—that every revelation had to be confirmed by two sources before publication—was summarily abandoned by many news outlets.

As often as not, reports were published or broadcast without a single source named, or mentioned in an attribution so vague as to be worthless. Readers and listeners were told repeatedly that this or that information came form ''sources,'' a word that at best conveyed only the notion that the information was not pure fiction or fantasy. As leaks flew wildly from these unspecified sources, the American public was left as seldom before in a major news event to guess where stories came from and why.

Readers and listeners were told what was reported to be included in affidavits and depositions in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case—information that supposedly was protected by a federal judge's gag order—or presented to independent counsel Starr. Leakers were violating the rules while the public was left to guess about their identity, and about the truth of what was passed on to them through the news media, often without the customary tests of validity.

In retrospect, it was sadly appropriate that the first hint of the story really broke into public view not in Newsweek, whose investigative reporter, Isikoff, had been doggedly pursuing for more than a year Paula Jones's allegations that Clinton had made inappropriate sexual advances to her when he was governor of Arkansas.

Rather, it surfaced in the wildly irresponsible Internet site of Matt Drudge, a reckless trader in rumor and gossip who makes no pretense of checking on the accuracy of what he reports. (''Matt Drudge,'' says Jodie Allen, Washington editor for Bill Gates's online magazine Slate, ''is the troll under the bridge of Internet journalism.'')

Drudge learned that Newsweek on Saturday, January 17, with its deadline crowding in, had elected not to publish. According to a February 2 Newsweek report, prosecutors working for Starr had told the news-magazine they needed a little more time to persuade former White House intern Monica Lewinsky to tell them about an alleged relationship she had with the president that had implications of criminal conduct.

Early Saturday morning, according to the same *Newsweek* report, the magazine ''was given access to'' a tape bearing conversations between Lewinsky and her friend Linda Tripp. But the *Newsweek* editors held off. Opting for caution of the sort that in earlier days was applauded, they waited.

The magazine also reported that publication was withheld because the tapes in themselves ''neither confirmed nor disproved'' obstruction of justice, because the magazine had ''no independent confirmation of the basis for Starr's inquiry,'' and because its reporters had never seen or talked with Lewinsky ''or done enough independent reporting to assess the young woman's credibility.'' If anything, such behavior if accurately described resonated with responsibility, although holding back also left *Newsweek* open to speculation by journalists that its action might have been a quid pro quo for information received.

Drudge, meanwhile, characteristically feeling no restraints, on Monday morning, January 19, jumped in and scooped *Newsweek* on its own story with a report that the newsmagazine had ''spiked'' it after a ''screaming fight in the editors' offices'' on the previous Saturday night. Isikoff later said ''there was a vigorous discussion about what was the journalistically proper thing to do. There were no screaming matches.''

Drudge was not without his defenders. Michael Kinsley, the editor of *Slate*, argued later that ''the Internet beat TV and print to this story, and ultimately forced it on them, for one simple reason: lower standards . . . There is a case to be made, however, for lower standards. In this case, the lower standards were vindicated. Almost no one now denies there is a legitimate story here.'' Kinsley seemed to harbor the crazy belief that had Drudge not reported that *Newsweek* had the story, the newsmagazine never would have printed it the next week, and therefore the Internet could take credit for ''forcing'' the story on the mainstream news media.

Newsweek, not going to press again until the next Saturday, finally put the story on its America Online site on Wednesday, January 21, after *The Washington Post* had broken it on newsstands in its early Wednesday edition out Tuesday night, under the four-column banner atop page one CLINTON ACCUSED OF URGING AIDE TO LIE. The story was attributed to ''sources close to the investigation.'' ABC News broadcast the gist of it on radio shortly after midnight Wednesday.

The *Los Angeles Times* also had the story in its Wednesday editions, but *The New York Times*, beaten badly by the *Post* on the Watergate story a quarter of a century earlier, was left at the gate again. The lead on its first story on Thursday, January 22, however, was a model of fact: ''As an independent counsel issued a fresh wave of White House subpoenas, President Clinton today denied accusations of having had a sexual affair with a twenty-one-year-old White House intern and promised to cooperate with prosecutors investigating whether the president obstructed justice and sought to have the reported liaison covered up.''

The story spread like an arsonist's handiwork. The Washington Post of Thursday reported from ''sources familiar with the investigation'' that the FBI had secretly taped Lewinsky by placing a ''body wire'' on Tripp and had got information that ''helped persuade'' Attorney General Janet Reno to ask for and receive from the three-judge panel overseeing the independent counsel authorization to expand the investigation.

On that same Thursday, the Times identified Lucianne Goldberg, the literary agent who later said she had advised Tripp to tape her conversations with Lewinsky. But The Washington Post continued to lead the way with more information apparently leaked by, but not attributed specifically to, lawyers in the case, and in the Paula Jones sexual harassment lawsuit that had caught Lewinsky in its web.

On network television on Friday, taste went out the window. ABC News correspondent Jackie Judd reported that ''a source with direct knowledge of'' Lewinsky's allegations said she ''would visit the White House for sex with Clinton in the early evening or early mornings on the weekends, when certain aides who would find her presence disturbing were not at the office.'' Judd went on: ''According to the source, Lewinsky says she saved, apparently as a kind of souvenir, a navy blue dress with the president's semen stain on it. If true, this could provide physical evidence of what really happened.''

That phrase ''if true'' became a gate-opener for any rumor to make its way into the mainstream. Judd's report ignited a round of stories about a search for such a dress. Despite disavowals of its existence by Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg, stories soon appeared about a rumored test for tele-tale DNA by the FBI.

The New York Post, under the headline Monica kept sex dress as a souvenir, quoted

''sources'' as saying the dress really was ''a black cocktail dress that Lewinsky never sent to the cleaners,'' adding that ''a dress with semen on it could provide DNA evidence virtually proving the man's identity—evidence that could be admissible at trial.'' The newspaper also reported that ''Ken Starr's investigators searched Lewinsky's Watergate apartment, reportedly with her consent and carried off a number of items, including some clothing,'' which Ginsburg subsequently confirmed. He later said that the president had given Lewinsky a long T-shirt, not a dress.

The Village Voice, in a scathing retracing of the path taken by the ABC News report of a semen-stained dress, labeled Judd's account hearsay and noted it had nevertheless been picked up by other news organizations as if such a dress existed. Six days after the original ABC story, CBS News reported that ''no DNA evidence or stains have been found on a dress that belongs to Lewinsky'' that was ''seized by the FBI from Lewinsky's apartment'' and tested by ''the FBI lab.''

ABC, the next day reported that ''according to law enforcement sources, Starr so far has come up empty in a search for forensic evidence of a relationship between Mr. Clinton and Lewinsky. Sources say a dress and other pieces of clothing were tested, but they all had been dry cleaned before the FBI picked them up from Lewinsky's apartment.'' In this comment, ABC implied that there had been stains, and it quoted a ABC spokesperson as saying, ''We stand by that initial report'' of a semen-stained dress.

A close competitor for the sleaziest report award was the one regarding the president's alleged sexual preference. On Wednesday, January 21, the Scripps Howard News Service reported that one person who has listened to the Lewinsky-Tripp tapes said Lewinsky ''described how Clinton allegedly first urged her to have oral sex, telling her that such acts were not technically adultery.''

That night, on ABC News's *Nightline*, Ted Koppel advised viewers gravely that ''the crisis in the White House'' ultimately ''may come down to the question of whether oral sex does or does not constitute adultery.'' The question, he insisted, was neither ''inappropriate'' nor ''frivolous'' because ''it may bear directly on the precise language of the president's denials. What sounds, in other words, like a categorical denial may prove to be something altogether different.''

Nightline correspondent Chris Bury noted Clinton's ''careful use of words in the matter of sex'' in the past. He recalled that in 1992, in one of Gennifer Flowers' taped conversations offered by Flowers in her allegations of a long affair with the then governor of Arkansas, she ''is heard discussing oral sex with Clinton. Bury went on, ''during this same time period, several Arkansas state troopers assigned to the governor's detail had said on the record that Clinton would tell them that oral sex is not adultery.''

The distinction came amid much speculation about whether Clinton, in his flat denial of having had ''sexual relations with that woman,'' might be engaging in the sort of semantic circumlocution for which he became notorious in his 1992 presidential campaign when asked about his alleged affair with Flowers, his draft status, smoking marijuana, and other matters.

The Washington Post on Sunday, January 25, reported on the basis of the Tripp tapes that ''in more than 20 hours of conversations'' with Tripp, ''Lewinsky described an eighteen-month involvement that included late-night trysts at the White House featuring oral sex.'' The story noted in its second paragraph: ''Few journalists have heard even a portion of these audio tapes, which include one made under the auspices of the FBI. Lewinsky herself has not commented on the tapes publicly. And yet they have been the subject of numerous news accounts and the fodder for widespread speculation.'' Nevertheless, it then added: ''Following are descriptions of key discussions recorded on the tapes, information that The Washington Post has obtained from sources who have listened to portions of them.''

The story went on to talk of ''bouts of 'phone sex' over the lines between the White House and her apartment'' and one comment to Tripp in which Lewinsky is alleged to have said she wanted to go back to the White House—as the newspaper rendered it—as ''special assistant to the president for [oral sex].'' The same story also reported that ''Lewinsky tells Tripp that she has an article of clothing with Clinton's semen on it.''

On television, these details led some anchors, such as Judy Woodruff of CNN, to preface some reports with the kind of unsuitable-for-children warning usually reserved for sex-and-violence shows like NYPD Blue. But comments on oral sex and semen may have been more jarring to older audiences, to whom such subjects have been taboo, than to viewers and readers from the baby boom and younger.

The tabloids were hard-pressed to outdo the mainstream, but they were up to the challenge. Borrowing from The Sun of London, the New York Post quoted Flowers in an interview saying ''she reveals that Clinton once gave her his 'biblical' definition of oral sex: 'It isn't 'real sex.'' The headline on the story helped preserve the Post's reputation: Gospel According to Bubba says oral sex isn't cheating.

Meanwhile, the search for an eyewitness to any sexual activity between Clinton and Lewinsky went on. On Sunday, January 25, Judd on ABC reported ''several sources'' as saying Starr was investigating claims that in the spring of 1996, the president and Lewinsky ''were caught in an intimate encounter'' by either Secret Service agents or White House staffers. The next morning, the front-page tabloid headlines of both the New York Post and the New York Daily News shouted, caught in the act, with the accompanying stories attributed to ''sources.''

Other newspapers' versions of basically the same story had various attributions: the Los Angeles Times: ''people familiar with the investigation''; The Washington Post: ''sources familiar with the probe''; The Wall Street Journal: ''a law enforcement official'' and ''unsubstantiated reports.'' The Chicago Tribune attributed ABC News, using the lame disclaimer ''if true'' and adding that ''attempts to confirm the report independently were unsuccessful.'' The New York Times, after considering publication, prudently decided against it.

Then on Monday night, January 26, The Dallas Morning News reported in the first edition of its Tuesday paper and on its Web site: ''Independent counsel Kenneth Starr's staff has spoken with a Secret Service agent who is prepared to testify that he saw President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky in a compromising situation in the White House, sources said Monday.'' The story, taken off the Internet by The Associated Press and put on its wire and used that night on Nightline, was retracted within hours on the ground that its source had told the paper that the source had been mistaken (see box, page 21).

Then there was the case of the television talk show host, Larry King, referring to a New York Times story about a message from Clinton on Lewinsky's answering machine—when there was, in fact, no such story. Interviewing lawyer Ginsburg the night of January 28, King told his guest that the story would appear in the the next day's paper, only to report later in the show: ''We have a clarification, I am told from our production staff. We may have jumped the gun on the fact that The New York Times will have a new report on the phone call from the president to Monica Lewinsky, the supposed phone call. We have no information on what The New York Times will be reporting tomorrow.''

Beyond the breakdown in traditional sourcing of stories in this case, not to mention traditional good taste, was the manner in which a questionably sourced or totally unsourced account was assumed to be accurate when printed or aired, and was picked up as fact by other reporters without attempting to verify it.

For days, a report in *The Washington Post* of what was said to be in Clinton's secret deposition in the Paula Jones case was taken by the press as fact and used as the basis for concluding that Clinton had lied in 1992 in an interview on *60 Minutes*. Noting that Clinton had denied any sexual affair with Gennifer Flowers, the *Post* reported that in the deposition Clinton acknowledged the affair, ''according to sources familiar with his testimony.''

Loose attribution of sources abounded. One of the worst offenders was conservative columnist Arianna Huffington. She offered her view on the CNBC talk show *Equal Time* that Clinton had had an affair with Shelia Lawrence, the widow of the late ambassador whose body was exhumed from Arlington National Cemetery after it was revealed he had lied about his military record. Huffington, in reporting on the alleged affair, confessed that ''we're not there yet in terms of proving it.'' So much for the application of journalistic ethics by journalistic amateurs.

With CNN and other twenty-four-hour cable outlets capable of breaking stories at any moment and Internet heist artists like Drudge poised to pounce on someone else's stories, it wasn't long before the Internet became the venue of first resort even for a daily newspaper. *The Wall Street Journal* on February 4, ready with a report that a White House steward had told a grand jury summoned by Starr that he had seen Clinton and Lewinsky alone in a study next to the Oval Office, posted the story on its World Wide Web site and its wire service rather than wait to break it the next morning in the *Journal*. In its haste, the newspaper did not wait for comment from the White House, leading deputy press secretary Joe Lockhart to complain that ''the normal rules of checking or getting a response to a story seem to have given way to the technology of the Internet and the competitive pressure of getting it first.''

The Web posting bore the attribution ''two individuals familiar with'' the steward's testimony. But his lawyer soon called the report ''absolutely false and irresponsible.'' The *Journal* that night changed the posting to say the steward had made the assertion not to the grand jury but to ''Secret Service personnel,'' The story ran in the paper the next day, also saying ''one individual familiar with'' the steward's story ''said that he had told Secret Service personnel that he found and disposed of tissues with lipstick and other stains on them'' after the Clinton-Lewinsky meeting. Once again, a juicy morsel was thrown out and pounced on by other news outlets without verification, and in spite of the firm denial of the *Journal* report from the steward's lawyer.

One of the authors of the story, Brian Duffy, later told *The Washington Post* the reason the paper didn't wait and print an exclusive the next morning was because ''we heard footsteps from at least one other news organization and just didn't think it was going to hold in this crazy cycle we're in.'' In such manner did the race to be first take

precedence over having a carefully checked story in the newspaper itself the next day.

White House press secretary Michael McCurry called the *Journal*'s performance ''one of the sorriest episodes of journalism'' he had ever witnessed, with ''a daily newspaper reporting hour-by-hour'' without giving the White House a chance to respond. *Journal* managing editor Paul Steiger replied in print that ''we went with our original story when we felt it was ready'' and ''did not wait for a response from the White House'' because ''it had made it clear repeatedly'' it wasn't going to respond to any questions about any aspect of the case.

Steiger said at that point that ''we stand by our account'' of what the steward had told the Secret Service. Three days later, however, the *Journal* reported that, contrary to its earlier story, the steward had not told the grand jury he had seen Clinton and Lewinsky alone. Steiger said ''we deeply regret our erroneous report of the steward's testimony.''

On a less salacious track, the more prominent mainstream dailies continued to compete for new breaks, relying on veiled sources. *The New York Times* contributed a report on February 6 that Clinton had called his personal secretary, Betty Currie, into his office and asked her ''a series of leading questions such as: 'We were never alone, right?''' The source given was ''lawyers familiar with her account.''

The *Post,* ''scrambling to catch up,'' as its media critic Howard Kurtz put it, shortly afterward confirmed the meeting ''according in a person familiar with'' Currie's account. Saying his own paper used ''milder language'' than the *Times* in hinting at a motivation of self-protection by the president, Kurtz quoted the *Post* story that said ''Clinton probed her memories of his contacts with Lewinsky to see whether they matched his own.'' In any event, Currie's lawyer later said it was ''absolutely false'' that she believed Clinton ''tried to influence her recollection.''

The technology of delivery is not all that has changed in the reporting of the private lives of presidents and other high-ranking officeholders. The news media have traveled light years from World War II days and earlier, when the yardstick for such reporting was whether misconduct alleged or proved affected the carrying out of official duties.

In 1984, when talk circulated about alleged marital infidelity by presidential candidate Gary Hart, nothing was written or broadcast because there was no proof and no one willing talk. In 1987, however, a *Newsweek* profile reported that his marriage had been rocky and he had been haunted by rumors of womanizing. A tip to *The Miami Herald* triggered the stake out of his Washington townhouse from which he was seen leaving with Donna Rice. Only after that were photographs of the two on the island of Bimini displayed in the tabloid *National Enquirer* and Hart was forced from the race. Clearly, the old rule—that questions about a public figure's private life were taboo—no longer applied.

But the next time a Presidential candidate ran into trouble on allegations of sexual misconduct—Bill Clinton in 1992—the mainstream press was dragged into hot pursuit of the gossip tabloids that not too many years earlier had been treated like a pack of junkyard dogs by their supposedly ethical betters. The weekly supermarket tabloid, *Star,* printed a long, explicit first-person account of Flowers' alleged twelve-year affair with Clinton. Confronted with the story on the campaign trail in New Hampshire, Clinton denied it but went into extensive damage control, culminating in his celebrated *60 Minutes* interview. With the allegations quickly becoming the centerpiece of his campaign, the mainstream press had no recourse but to report how he was dealing with it. Thus did the tail of responsible journalism come to wag the dog.

From then on, throughout Clinton's 1992 campaign and ever since, the once-firm line between rumor and truth, between gossip and verification, has been crumbling. The assault has been led by the trashy tabloids but increasingly accompanied by major newspapers and television, with copy-cat tabloid radio and TV talk shows piling on. The proliferation of such shows, their sensationalism, bias and lack of responsibility and taste have vastly increased the hit-and-run practice of what now goes under the name of journalism.

The practitioners with little pretense to truth-telling or ethics, and few if any credentials suggesting journalistic training in either area, now clutter the airwaves, on their own shows (Watergate felon G. Gordon Liddy, conspiracy-spinner Rush Limbaugh, Iran-Contra figure Oliver North) or as loud mouth hosts and guests on weekend talkfests (John McLaughlin, Matt Drudge).

In the print press and on the Internet as well, journalism pretenders and poseurs feed misinformation, speculation, and unverified accusations to the reading public. The measure of their success in polluting the journalism mainstream in the most recent Clinton scandal was the inclusion of Drudge, as a guest analyst on NBC News' *Meet the Press.* The program also included Isikoff, the veteran *Newsweek* investigative reporter.

Playing straight man to Drudge, moderator Tim Russert asked him about ''reports'' that there were ''discussions'' on the Lewinsky tapes ''of other women, including other White House staffers, involved with the president.'' The professional gossip replied, dead-pan: ''There is talk all over this town another White House staffer is going to come out from behind the curtains this week. If this is the case—and you couple this with the headline that the *New York Post* has, [that] there are hundreds, hundreds [of other women] according to Miss Lewinsky, quoting Clinton—we're in for a huge shock that goes beyond the specific episode. It's a whole psychosis taking place in the White House.''

Drudge officiously took the opportunity to lecture the White House reporters for not doing their job. He expressed ''shock and very much concern that there's been deception for years coming out of this White House. I mean, this intern relationship didn't happen last week. It happened over a course of year and a half, and I'm concerned. Also, there's a press corps that wasn't monitoring the situation close enough.'' Thus spoke the celebrated trash-peddler while Isikoff sat silently by.

Such mixing of journalistic pretenders side-by-side with established, proven professional practitioners gives the audience a deplorably disturbing picture of a news business that already struggles under public skepticism, cynicism, and disaffection based on valid criticism of mistakes, lapses, poor judgment, and bad taste. The press and television, like the Republic itself, will survive its shortcomings in the Lewinsky affair, whether or not President Clinton survives the debacle himself. The question is, has the performance been a mere lapse of standards in the heat of a fast-breaking, incredibly competitive story of major significance? A tapering off of the mad frenzy of the first week or so of the scandal gives hope that this is the case.

Or does it signal abandonment of the old in favor of a looser regard for the responsibility to tell readers and listeners where stories come from, and for standing behind the veracity of them? It is a question that goes to the heart of the practice of a trade that, for all its failings, should be a bulwark of a democracy that depends on an accurately informed public. Journalism in the late 1990s still should be guided by adherence to the same elemental rules that have always existed—report what you know as soon as you know it, not before. And if you're not sure wait and check it out yourself.

Those news organizations that abide by this simple edict, like a disappointed *Newsweek* in this instance, may find themselves run over by less scrupulous or less conscientious competitors from time to time. But in the long run they will maintain their own reputations, and uphold the reputation of a craft that is under mounting attack. To do otherwise is to surrender to the sensational, the trivial and the vulgar that is increasingly infecting the serious business of informing the nation.

WHAT WE DO NOW

(By the editors of CJR)

Regardless of who ultimately wins or loses, regardless of who is judged right or wrong, regardless of the fate of William Jefferson Clinton—or Monica Lewinsky or Kenneth Starr—what will matter mightily to journalists are the long-lasting lessons that we learn from this lamentable and depressing affair.

However the scandal turns out, the press stands to lose in the court of public opinion. In a Pew Research Center poll of 844 people taken from January 30 to February 2, nearly two-thirds said the media had done only a fair or poor job of carefully checking the facts before reporting this story; 60 percent said the media had done only a fair or poor job of being objective on the story and 54 percent thought the press put in another fair or poor performance in providing the right amount of coverage. ''The rise of Clinton's popularity in the polls is in part a backlash against the press,'' said Andrew Glass, Cox Newspapers' senior correspondent. ''One way the people can say that the press has been too critical is to tell the pollsters that they support Clinton.''

If the president should fall, then those who jumped the gun, who ran with rumor and innuendo, who published or broadcast phony reports without eventual retraction, will falsely claim vindication and triumph. And if this president should persevere and prevail, many in the public will be convinced that the press and the independent counsel were in some unholy conspiracy to persecute him. Remember that the Clinton controversy is only the latest in a string of stories—Diana, O.J., Versace—that the press has been widely accused of exploiting. Says *Los Angeles Times* editor Michael Parks: ''We're good at wretched excess, at piling on.''

the preceding article targeted where parts of the press have gone wrong in reporting the White House crisis, and leads to these further conclusions:

Competition has become more brutal than ever and has spurred excess. TV newsmagazines are now viewed by traditional print newsmagazines as direct competitors. Thus, says Michael Elliott, editor of *Newsweek International.* ''The proliferation of TV news shows makes it harder for us to delay the release of a story.'' With the spread of twenty-four-hour all-news cable channels—CNN, MSNBC, Fox—there's pressure to report news even when there isn't any. In a remarkably prescient statement last year to the Catto Conference on Journalism and Society, former TV newsman Robert MacNeil said: ''I tremble a little for the next sizable crisis with three all-news channels, and scores of other cable and local broadcasters, fighting

for a share of the action, each trying to make his twist on the crisis more dire than the next.''

The Internet has speeded the process and lowered quality by giving currency to unreliable reports. When a story is posted on the Internet, it races around the globe almost instantly. But the Internet has no standards for accuracy. Web gossipist Matt Drudge once claimed only an 80 percent accuracy rate—wholly unacceptable under any journalistic standards. Technology, long the journalist's great and good friend, has turned out to be a dangerous mistress. ''The Internet is a gun to the head of the responsible media,'' says Jonathan Fenby, editor of the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong. ''If you choose not to report a story, the Internet will.''

As journalism speeds up, there is less time to think, to ponder, to edit, to judge, to confirm, to reconsider. Never was there greater need for gatekeepers with sound and unimpassioned editorial judgment who refuse to be stampeded in the pressure of competition.

And never was there a better time to start examining what journalists can do, immediately, to improve and recapture public respect.

A major step, surely, would be to resolve to make abundantly clear in the reporting of every fast-breaking or controversial story what is known fact and what is mere speculation—or better yet, to swear off disseminating speculation at all except as it can be fully attributed to a knowledgeable source. And to forgo cannibalizing the stories of other news outfits—whether mainstream or tabloid—and to refrain from merely retransmitting them on their face value, without independent reporting.

Clearly, every news organization needs to establish its own written guidelines for almost every conceivable coverage situation. Many already have them. In Britain, the BBC has a thick book containing policies for everything from covering elections to interviewing terrorists to determining when the people's right know supersedes what may constitute invasion of privacy. The BBC's dedication to the two-source rule caused anchorman Nik Gowing to fill forty excruciating minutes of airtime last August—awaiting confirmation by a second source of Princess Diana's death—before broadcasting the news.

Journalists must more freely and fully admit—and quickly correct—their errors. More gross missteps were committed in the early stages of the Clinton scandal than in all of Watergate. Just one example: All of those ''sightings'' of the president in intimate situations with Ms. Lewinsky in the White House as reported, variously, by ABC News, The Dallas Morning News, and The Wall Street Journal. As cjr went to press, not one had been confirmed.

Newspersons must have the courage to stand up to their editors, news directors, and other bosses when the need arises—and refuse to take a story beyond where sound journalistic principles allow.

In short, the time has come for a thoughtful and uncompromising reappraisal—time to stand back and recall the fundamentals that once made the free press of America the envy of the world. We asked a sampling of journalists and media analysts for their views on what lessons the profession ought to learn from the Clinton scandal story, and where we go from here:

Walter Isaacson, managing editor, Time: We're in a set of rooms where we've never been before. It's murky, and we keep bumping into the furniture. But this is a very valid story of a strong-willed prosecutor and a president whose actions have been legitimately questioned. Reporters must be very careful to stick to known facts, but not be afraid to cover the story. A case involving sex can be a very legitimate story, but we can't let our journalistic standards lapse simply because the sexual element makes everybody over-excited. One lesson is, in the end, you're going to be judged on whether you got it right, not just on whether you got it first.

Richard Wald, senior vice president, ABC News: There are, at least, three lessons.

One: when you are dealing with the president and sex, you must be extremely precise in how you say what it is you think you know. When carefully phrased stories that we ran on ABC were picked up by other news organizations, nobody said: ''ABC News reports they got the story from source A or source B.'' They simply reported it as fact. It then gets into the public vocabulary as fact rather than as allegation.

Two: People dislike the messenger but like the message. If you believe the polls, the public is annoyed with the media and doesn't want to hear about this story anymore. On the other hand, they're buying a lot of newspapers and driving up the ratings of twenty-four-hour news channels. If you believe surveys that ask people what they watch on TV, PBS is the highest rated network in the world. And ballet is huge.

Three: We all get tarred with the excesses of a few. Some TV news organizations rush onto the air with bulletins that don't mean anything. Some newspapers plaster stuff over page one that's really quite minor. Each tiny advance in the story is treated like a journalistic triumph. But the bulk of the reporting has been reasonable and in context.

Marvin Kalb, director, The Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University: Check the coverage of the O.J. trials; the Versace/Cunanan saga, Princess Diana's tragic death. With each burst of excessive, shallow, intrusive, and hardly uplifting electronic herd journalism, there has been the promise that next time it would get better. The new technology and the new economics have combined to produce a new journalism, which has bright spots but is marked by murky questions about ethics, slipping standards, and quality.

James Fallows, editor, *U.S. News & World Report*: When this whole thing is over, we'll be wringing our hands in symposia and post-mortem critiques. The trick would be to keep some of that retrospective view in mind while we're in the middle of covering the story. A year from now people will be saying:

That we shouldn't have let this story blot out so much else of the news, as happened with O.J. and Diana and Flight 800.

That we should have avoided some of the flights of fancy that come with ever-escalating hypothetical questions. (''If it is proven that Monica Lewinsky killed Vince Foster, then . . .?'')

That we should have been more skeptical about single-source anonymous reports—and made the possible motive of leakers clearer to our readers.

That we should have found some way to retain the proper function of editorial judgment, i.e., waiting to see when there is enough basis to publish a story—rather than just saying: ''It's on the Internet, it's 'Out there.'''

That we should have recognized that we're in a morally complex situation when it comes to dealing with leaks—one where we really need consider the inherent rights and wrongs. The point is: why wait until next year before trying to let such concerns shape our coverage?

Anthony Lewis, columnist, *The New York Times*: The serious press has an obligation to stand back and warm the reader about how thin is the basis for many of these stories. It's a disgrace what the papers are doing in terms of sourcing.

The obsession of the press with sex and public officials is crazy. Still, after Linda Tripp went to the prosecutor, it became hard to say we shouldn't be covering this. My criticism is in the way it was covered. In general, the press started out rather gullible as regards the Starr operation, and has caught up. The public's been way ahead.

William Marimow, managing editor, the Baltimore *Sun*: When a story is sensitive and controversial, you don't go into print until you've done everything possible to interview people on both sides of the issue, until you understand their accounts of what happened. If you're going to report that ''sources'' said a White House butler saw the president and intern in a ''compromising situation,'' you ought to go to the ends of the earth to get the point of view of the butler, the president, the intern, and their attorneys.

Geneva Overholser, ombudsman, The Washington Post: Again and again, readers complained about how much we in the press have been reporting from anonymous sources that just seems like gossip. And that is, in fact, inexcusable. We aren't clear enough [in our reports] about the possible motivations of these sources. It's not that we can't have anonymous sources, but each one costs us something in credibility.

And we're too loose with language. One story quoted a source as saying that in her written proffer Monica Lewinsky had ''acknowledged'' having sex with the president. But she may have ''asserted'' it rather than ''acknowledged'' it. We can't use language that hangs somebody before the facts are out.

The Washington Post conceded that one of its articles was based on sources who had heard the [Lewinsky-Tripp] tapes, not on a hearing of the tapes by the reporter. Yet there were quotes around the president's alleged words to Lewinsky—''You must deny this.'' Here's an anonymous source paraphrasing a woman who is characterizing the words of the president to her on tapes made without her knowledge.

Deni Elliott, director, Practical Ethics Center, University of Montana and professor in the university's philosophy and journalism departments: In the Monica Lewinsky stories in the February 16 Newsweek, there are at least thirty instances in which information is either not attributed, or attributed to anonymous sources, or attributed to other news organizations.

News organizations have not differentiated between different kinds of leaks. Leaks of grand jury testimony create information that ought not be disclosed unless it can be explained that the information is so important that the leak is justified. Grand juries have great latitude and are supposed to operate secretly because of that latitude. If information looks like grand jury testimony but is not, the reader should be informed, or readers will be led to believe you can't trust in grand jury secrecy.

Peter Prichard, president, Freedom Forum, former editor, USA Today: One big lesson: never let hypercompetition take precedence over good news judgment. And be alert to the possibility that you're being manipulated. Also: One anonymous source on any story is simply not enough. The speed of news cycles these days has resulted in errors, but generally the coverage has been good. Newspapers have done a better job than television.

Thomas E. Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press, Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government: It's not hard to identify the standards we ought to have, it's just hard to get everybody on

board. It's going to take real leadership—strong voices, editors, reporters who are willing to stand up to management.

There isn't much real self-criticism among journalists. There has been a flurry of it in the current scandal because so many stories were so outrageous. But where is the same kind of scrutiny the press gives everyone else—really hammering away? These flurries blow over and six months later they're forgotten. Journalists have to say, ''Here's an example of the kinds of things we don't do''—and then don't do it. And if journalists do do it, someone must tell them. ''You're violating the standards of your profession. Stop it.''

Anthonty Marro, editor, Newsdays; Before self-examination moves into self-flagellation, let's look at the lessons here:

With the blur that results when television viewers can switch from the CBS Evening News to Hard Copy, Larry King Live, and Geraldo, it's more important than ever for journalists to sort out: What are unproven allegations and what are proven facts? Which facts are criminal and impeachable and which are merely embarrassing? And what information is coming from serious journalism and what is coming from entertainment programs that have some of the trappings of journalism but few of the standards?

All life is Rashomon, as we seen in early reports on the testimony of [Clinton's personal secretary] Betty Curries, in which two of the nation's very best newspapers produced two very different stories from pretty much the same bits of information. The New York Times gave something very much like a prosecutor's view of the incident (i.e., Clinton was coaching here to lie) while The Washington Post gave something very much like a defense lawyer's view (i.e., Clinton was just trying to refresh his memory about his meetings with Monica Lewinsky). Sorting this out can be both difficult and time-consuming and no one should expect the press even at its best to come up with quick and conclusive answers.

Reporters need to keep reminding themselves that just because sources say they've obtained information doesn't mean that they've obtained all of it, or that it's fully corroborated, or that it means precisely what they suggest it means.

James O'Shea, deputy managing editor news, Chicago Tribune: We're in a new world in terms of the way information flows to the nation. The days when you can decide not to print a story because it's not well enough sourced are long gone. When a story get into the public realm, as it did with the Drudge Report, then you have to characterize it, you have to tell your readers, ''There is out there, you've probably been hearing about it on TV and the Internet. We have been unable to substantiate it independently.'' And then give them enough information to judge the validity of it.

Not reporting it all is the worst thing you can do because you create a vacuum in which people begin thinking a story is true and you're not reporting it because you're a backer of the president. One of the most popular things we did was run a big chart in our Sunday paper that told what's been reported, what is known, and what is not known. We delineated, trying to separate fact from fiction and readers responded very well. The trouble with not reporting anything at all until it's substantiated is that you're not distinguishing between fact and fiction, and then fiction wins.

AND WHAT WILL HISTORY SAY?

(By Lance Morrow)

It's fascinating, in all of this, to look at the trajectory of the Baby Boomers. In their experience, the presidency was enacted first as tragedy. Now it plays itself out as farce.

The sixties—the country that Bill Clinton came from, the culture that formed him and his generation—was a carnival of the tragic, with bodies every where. Clinton's Rose Garden hero, John Kennedy, was murdered in Dallas. Lyndon Johnson led the nation into the lost war that eventually killed 58,000 Americans and more than a million Vietnamese, that ruined the Great Society and tore America in two. Johnson collapsed upon the stage like King Lear in the fifth act, and six years later, Watergate (that is, scandals arising from the American civil war over Vietnam) forced Richard Nixon out of the White House as well. Large, Shakespearean themes: assassinations, war, usurpation of power.

In nineties America—the country over which the quintessential boomer presides—we see a good-times presidency brought to peril by . . . fellatio with an intern. A hilariously degrading spectacle, but at worst, perhaps a shame, in a society that is only incompletely vulnerable to shame.

Journalists should pay attention to an interesting theme that runs through the continuum from sixties to nineties. In both the tragedy and the farce, one notices the central, corrupting role of liars and lies (about Vietnam, about Watergate, about sex) and therefore a concomitant, sometimes illogical ebb and flow of public trust in the president, and in the media. In the sixties, Lyndon Johnson squandered the moral authority of the presidency. Looking at Clinton's astonishing approval ratings last month, it seemed to be the media that had at last exhausted their credibility.

Are Americans very good judges of character? Short-term, their verdicts naturally tend to be astigmatic. But Americans seemed to have decided that short-term media judgments are even worse: sensational and even hysterical. So citizens may let the president off by a process much like jury nullification.

Journalists cannot help speculating on what will be the ultimate verdict on Clinton. Close up, he seems to represent an oddly contemporary discontinuum of effective leadership and breezy squalor. But Americans disconnected their judgment of Clinton's moral behavior from their opinion of his job performance.

History is holistic only in the lives of the saints. Otherwise, the disconnects and ambiguities prevail. Perhaps we journalists should not ask, what place a president will occupy in history, but should try to anticipate the eventual range of ambiguity about him. How widely separated will be the good-bad spectrum of his reputation? As a people, our judgments, after all, run to extremes. Was Jefferson democracy's icon of Enlightenment? Or a slave-owning hypocrite?

Harry Truman: a squalid mediocrity? So he seemed close up. His approval rating in polls at the end of his presidency was 23 percent, an all-time low. Longer range, the second verdict prevailed: Truman as tough, spunky hero of plain folks, common sense, give-'em-hell underdog democracy.

Eisenhower: somnambulating geezer of good times, or historian Fred Greenstein's cunning ''hidden hand'' president, a kind of Zen hero of all the trouble that did not happen? Reagan the clueless? Reagan the visionary?

In early February, ABC's Sam Donaldson, wondering on-camera about Clinton's high ratings amid squalid charges, remembered the story of Lincoln's reaction when told that Ulysses Grant, his most effective general, was a drunk. Lincoln is said to have replied: ''Find out what he drinks, and send my other generals a case of it.'' But of course, as Donaldson did not say, Ulysses Grant went on to preside over one of America's most corrupt administrations.

What will be the range of ambiguity in history's judgment of Clinton? Maybe he will be thought to be innocent of the sexual stories that are told about him. Maybe I am the queen of Rumania. Maybe the accusations don't matter anyway. Paul Johnson, a conservative author, thinks that history will remember Clinton as a mediocrity clinging to a rung just below Chester A. Arthur.

Or will Clinton be recalled by both journalists and historian as a brilliant politician and admirable president who worked hard, caringly, sensibly, to trim and tune post-ideological government and to preside over one of the most successful, prosperous eras of American history—the baby boomers' middle-aged payoff?

Someone may eventually fit all of this into a Unified Field Theory of Media. So far, we know this: the media in the hard markets of multicultural democratic pluralism, make their living on the excitements of discontinuous reality. At the low end that means the checkout-counter view of public lives (a view that is not necessarily inaccurate). The problem is that, dumbing down, we have too often abandoned the high end. A falling tide leaves all boats in the mud.

In the third week of February, as CJR went to press, the Clinton-Starr story was changing from day to day. One saw the possibility that it might lead to unendurable mess and resignation. Or alternatively, that the story might subside into chronic soap opera and eventually be canceled due to low ratings. A scandal must keep surpassing itself or lose its audience. A sunny presidency of denial might tootle on across the bridge to the twenty-first century.

FUMBLE IN DALLAS

(By Terry Anderson)

''We discovered through the unraveling of a source that we had messed up,'' laments Ralph Langer, editor of the Dallas Morning News. ''We had a bad procedure for vetting sources out of the Washington bureau.''

On Sunday, January 25, ABC News reported there had been a witness to an intimate encounter between President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky in the White House. On Monday, the Morning News reported a similar story, quoting both ABC and a ''White House source.'' In the first edition of the Tuesday morning paper, the News fleshed out the story: A Secret Service agent had seen President Clinton and Lewinsky in a ''compromising situation'' in the White House, and the agent had agreed to cooperate with special prosecutor Kenneth Starr. ''This person is now a government witness,'' the paper quoted its source. A second source confirmed the report.

Within minutes, The Associated Press picked up the story, adding the fruits of its own investigations. ''We had been working on the ABC report all day Monday, but had no luck,'' says the AP's Washington bureau chief, Jonathan Wolman. ''But we didn't just pick up the Morning News's story. We added quotes from senior officials of the Secret Service saying they'd investigated the report and had doubts about it. And we had David Kendall, the president's personal lawyer, calling it 'false and malicious,' ''

The qualifications were appropriate. Even as the Dallas paper's first edition hit the streets, the primary source of the story called back saying he had got it wrong. In the ninety minutes between the first and second editions, Langer pulled the story. An urgent retraction was posted on the paper's Web site. The AP quickly issued the much-hated ''Bulletin Kill'' to its members, but

that was too late. Many had already printed the piece, and had to wait for the next day to carry the AP's follow-up explanation.

The Morning News's blunder was easily identified. ''We require two independent sources [on major stories],'' Langer explained, ''and an editor has to know who the sources are.'' So far, so good, While the Tuesday story quoted only one source, a ''Washington lawyer familiar with the negotiations,'' the paper actually had another that it did not reveal, and even a third on a ''tell me if I shouldn't print this'' basis, according to Langer. When the primary source backed out, Langer checked the second source. He found that source had thought he was confirming the vaguer story the Morning News had carried on Monday, not the more specific Tuesday version.

As all this unfolded, the Monday editions of the New York Post and the New York Daily News splashed identical frontpage headlines, Caught in the Act. Each quoted only ''sources,'' without further elaboration, The Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times ran similar reports from their own sources. The Wall Street Journal did the same. Of course, there is no way short of a public unmasking to tell if all these publications' sources were separate individuals or the same (busy) people talking to all of them. Meanwhile, on television newscasts, the story lost its qualifications, drifting toward a concreteness that still had not been justified.

The Morning News, strangely enough, later insisted that its original story was mainly correct, and that the mistakes involved only ''nuances.'' ''We thought we had two sources saying a Secret Service agent was negotiating for access to Starr, had gotten it and had talked to Starr's camp,'' Langer says. ''Our source bailed out because it was a 'former or present agent'—a nuance, and, second, the negotiations to get this person to Starr were complex, and mediators were involved. The basic facts of a Secret Service agent, past or present, being put in touch with Starr was correct.'' But Langer also downgraded the ''compromising situation'' of Clinton and Lewinsky to an ''ambiguous'' one—a much more important shift.

Darrell Christian, AP managing editor, says the changes, especially the less damning description of the position Lewinsky and Clinton were caught in involved more than nuances. ''When they [the Dallas Paper] withdrew the story and said those details were inaccurate, we thought we had no choice but to take it off the wire.''

As CJR went to press, no news organization had been able to confirm any part of the story beyond doubt. No present or former agent had been named. No journalist had claimed direct contact with him or her.

So, Langer was asked, is the story true? ''Tough questions. I can't personally answer. People in a position to know are saying it is true, and I don't think they're making it up.''

A BREAKDOWN IN FARM COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, when farmers break down in the field during harvest, they do not have the luxury of hauling their equipment to the shop to wait on time-consuming repairs. Instead, they uses the tools they have available at the time, a pliers, a hammer, baling wire, to get the equipment moving again and to get the crop in the bin.

Mr. Speaker, it is harvest time in Kansas, and our markets are having a breakdown. Farmers in Kansas and across America are facing tough times. The wheat harvest is well underway, and while the yields have been satisfactory, farmers are facing the lowest prices in recent memory, due in large part to lagging exports of U.S. commodities.

Projections by the U.S. Department of Agriculture forecast agricultural exports declining $5 billion this year. This decline is having a serious impact on the bottom line for Kansas farm families. Current wheat prices are $1 lower than those received during the last 2 years.

One of our best chances to lift commodity prices and breathe life into the farm economy is through an aggressive export policy. The House of Representatives today made a significant move in that direction. Today we passed the agricultural appropriation bill for 1999. Under this legislation, the P.L. 480 Food for Peace Program is fully funded at over $1 billion.

The Export Enhancement Program is fully funded at $550 million to help combat unfair export subsidies, and the General Sales Manager Program is funded at a level that makes available over $5 billion of credit guarantees for agricultural exports.

U.S. farmers are clearly the most efficient and can compete with farmers anywhere in the world. They cannot, however, compete with the treasuries of the European Union and other subsidizing countries. U.S. farmers continue to lose markets and market share due to foreign subsidies and unfair trading practices by our competitors. Still, the Clinton administration has refused to use the tools we have available to combat these subsidies and gain negotiating strength to push for that level playing field in future trade negotiations.

Today's action by Congress makes it clear, we are committed to an aggressive trade policy, committed to exports, and committed to American agriculture. Despite the current crisis, the administration has been reluctant to use the Export Enhancement Program for wheat or flour, citing criticism of the program, without offering alternatives or suggestions to make the program more effective.

The fact is that EEP is one of the few export promotion programs that is authorized, funded, and GATT legal. If changes need to be made to the program to make it more effective, these steps can and should be taken by the administration.

With the passage today of the agricultural appropriation bill, Congress, both the House and Senate, have acted to give USDA both the authority as well as the money to aggressively combat trade subsidies by our agriculture competitors.

Mr. Speaker, there is a breakdown in farm country, and it is time for this administration to use the tools, be that the pliers or the hammer or the baling wire, whatever it takes. Those tools are available. They need to be used, and we need to get our farmers up and running.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. UNDERWOOD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FOREIGN OPERATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives will soon be addressing the foreign operations appropriations bill for fiscal year 1999. Shortly after the July 4 recess members of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs will begin marking up this legislation, which determines to a major degree American engagement in a changing world.

I would like to take this opportunity to address an area where I believe American policies, assistance, and investment can make a critical difference in promoting our values of democracy, human rights, and free markets. That is, support for the Republics of Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh.

Mr. Speaker, I served as co-chairman with the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PORTER) of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. Our Caucus has 64 members from both sides of the aisle, and I visited Armenia and Nagorno Karabagh, and can tell Members that the need for help is still great, and the potential of Armenia to be a long-term friend and partner of the United States is also great.

The Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related deserves praise for many important provisions in the fiscal year 1998 foreign ops bill. That legislation provided for the first time direct U.S. humanitarian assistance to the people of Nagorno Karabagh. It also established a discretionary spending fund to restore infrastructure and promote regional integration in the Caucasus.

As in previous years, the legislation also earmarked direct aid to the Republic of Armenia. It maintained the section 907 ban on direct aid to Azerbaijan, albeit with some very big exemptions, until that country lifts its blockade of Armenia and Nagorno